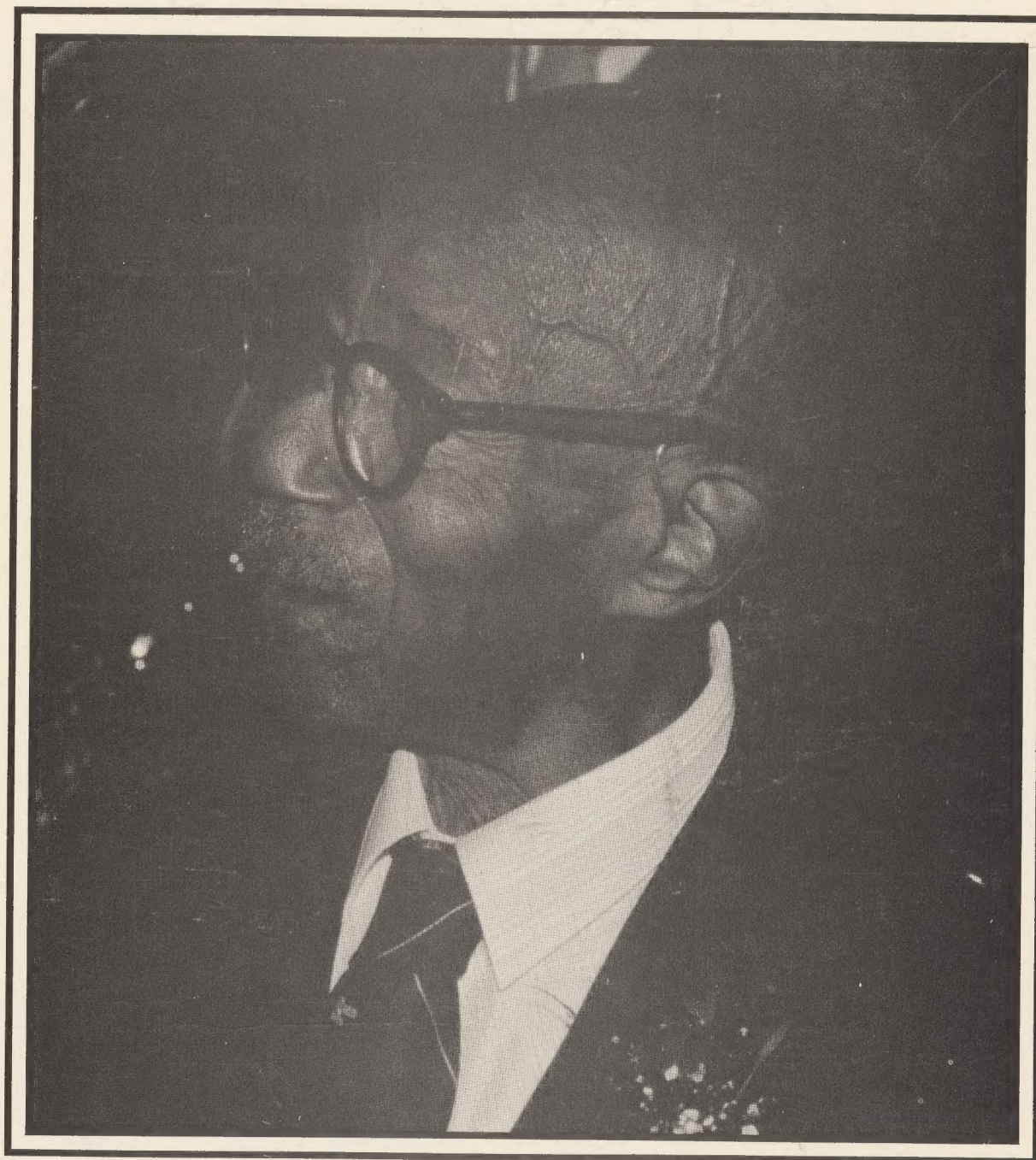




MHS 4368

AN AMERICAN CLASSIC

# Eubie Blake



**THE AMHERST SAXOPHONE QUARTET**  
**PERFORMS**  
**THE MUSIC OF JAMES HUBERT BLAKE**

## SIDE 1

- \*1. Charleston Rag (The Sounds of Africa)
- \*2. Kitchen Tom
- \*3. Poor Katie Redd
- +4. Jassamine Lane  
(Eubie Blake and Noble Sissle)
- \*5. Tricky Fingers
- \*6. Randi's Rag
- \*7. Fizz Water

## SIDE 2

- \*1. Dictys on Seventh Avenue
- \*2. Butterfly
- #3. Eubie Dubie  
(Eubie Blake and John Guarneri)
- \*4. Chevy Chase
- \*5. Valse Marion
- \*6. Troublesome Ivories
- \*7. I'm Just Wild About Harry  
(Eubie Blake and Noble Sissle)

Arranged by

\*Michael Nascimben  
+ Stephen Rosenthal  
#Salvatore Andolina



### The Amherst Saxophone Quartet

Salvatore Andolina, *Soprano saxophone*  
Michael Nascimben, *Alto saxophone*  
Stephen Rosenthal, *Tenor saxophone*  
Harry Fackelman, *Baritone saxophone*



### THE COMPOSER

**James Hubert Blake**, born on February 7, 1883, is truly a "Living National Treasure" and an American Classic. Blake completed his first composition in 1899, the same year Scott Joplin gained public recognition with his *Maple Leaf Rag*. Eubie is still composing at the age of 98. His skills as a performer and entertainer are well documented on records and piano rolls, in concerts and television appearances. However, the full extent of his compositional talents has yet to be fully recognized and appreciated.

One reason for Blake's appeal as a composer is that he spans so much of our American culture and so many changes in contemporary musical styles. Quoting from Robert Kimball and William Bolcom in *Reminiscing With Sissle and Blake*, "Eubie was to be influenced by nearly every Rag-pianist he came in contact with through those [early] years, just as he was to influence many others. His open pair of ears took in and digested much other music, too: Victor Herbert, Franz Lehár, Oskar Strauss, and the light classics. Grieg and Wagner were also bouncing around inside his head; it was all music and all fascinating."

Blake's compositions, which number over 2,000, may be divided into three categories. The first is ragtime. He began composing this music when the form was in its heyday. Eubie was among the leaders of the second generation East Coast ragtime writers who were producing a more urban synthesis of that folk music form. Blake was to compose a number of rags for use in exhibitions of pianistic skill called "cutting contests." Works such as *Tricky Fingers* and *Troublesome Ivories* were not only technical show pieces, but succeeded at incorporating complex pianistic "tricks" into totally satisfying compositions. His harmonies were more adventurous than most of his contemporaries' and in general his writing now seems to have been many years ahead of its time. It was with the publishing of *Chevy Chase* and *Fizz Water* in 1914 that Eubie first gained widespread recognition as a composer.

The second category of compositions is Blake's work for the Broadway stage. Eubie was the first black composer to find acceptance and success on Broadway and he certainly must be ranked among the finest writers of American popular song. Eubie penned the music for twelve hit shows which contained such tunes as *I'm Just Wild About Harry*, *Memories of You*, *Love Will Find a Way*, *Shuffle Along*, and *Jassamine Lane*. He has shown a flair for beautiful, interesting melodies which always have some twist or surprise.

The third category of Blake's work falls under the heading of what he calls "semiclassical" music. His tone poem *Butterfly* and *Valse Marion* are but two notable examples. Eubie says, "In my lifetime I have never ceased being influenced by all music, particularly the music of Mozart, Chopin, Tchaikovsky, Victor Herbert, Gershwin, Debussy, and Strauss." His interest in classical music led him, in his mid-sixties, to study music at New York University, concentrating on the Schillinger System of Composition.

It is a fact that Eubie is much better known today than he was 35 years ago. On December 27, 1945, he married Marion Gant Tyler. Marion had been a business executive for Northrup Aircraft Corp., personal secretary to

## AN AMERICAN CLASSIC

# EUBIE BLAKE

## THE AMHERST SAXOPHONE QUARTET PERFORMS THE MUSIC OF JAMES HUBERT BLAKE



THE AMHERST SAXOPHONE QUARTET (photo by Howard Rosenthal)

### THE ASSOCIATION

The Amherst Quartet became involved with the music of Eubie Blake through a series of happy coincidences. During the mid-seventies Salvatore Andolina worked in Buffalo with Steven Radecke, a pianist who specializes in ragtime. Radecke had been producing ragtime festivals in St. Louis, Missouri, and invited the Quartet to participate in "Ragtime 79."

Eubie Blake was the special guest of the Festival that year. The Amherst Quartet had the opportunity to talk with and perform for Eubie and in turn was privileged to listen to him perform his own music. By the time the group left St. Louis, Nascimben had already completed several arrangements of Blake's music.

Blake has said, "These boys of the Amherst Saxophone Quartet are fine musicians and they play my music just the way I meant it to be played. I'm proud that they enjoy performing my compositions and do it so well. This recording is a very special present to receive on my 98th birthday, and my wife and I certainly appreciate it."



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W.C. Handy, an actress in black Broadway shows in the late '20s, and widow of the famed musician William Tyler. Because of her vast experience she was perfectly suited to manage Eubie's career. Marion has seen to every detail of Eubie's professional life, carefully bringing him once again to national prominence.

### THE ARTISTS

The Amherst Saxophone Quartet was formed in January 1978 as a classical ensemble for the purpose of performing the literature written for soprano, alto, tenor, and baritone saxophone. Few people realize that there is a larger repertoire for saxophone quartet than for any other chamber ensemble with the exception of string quartet.

Salvatore Andolina, soprano, received a BFA degree from SUNY at Buffalo. He has studied saxophone with Ed Yadzinski and John Sedola and clarinet with James Pyne and Stanley Hasty. Mr. Andolina was a regular member of the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra playing clarinet and bass clarinet for the 1978-79 season.

Michael D. Nascimben, alto, holds a bachelor's degree from SUNY at Fredonia and a master's and doctorate from the University of Michigan. He has taught saxophone at the University of Texas, SUNY at Buffalo, and instrumental music in the public schools of western New York. As well as being an educator, he is active in conducting and arranging.

Stephen Rosenthal, tenor, studied saxophone with Edward Yadzinski and John Sedola, and clarinet with James Pyne. He received a BFA degree in music performance from SUNY at Buffalo. Mr. Rosenthal has performed with the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra and the Empire State Wind Ensemble.

Harry Fackelman, baritone, received a MFA degree in music from SUNY at Buffalo. He has studied saxophone with Edward Yadzinski and clarinet with Allen Sigel. Mr. Fackelman has performed with the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra and the Empire State Wind Ensemble.

### THE MUSIC

**CHARLESTON RAG** (1899)—This was originally entitled *Sounds of Africa* by Will Marion Cook. In 1921 it was renamed and promptly sold a million records. Already a fully developed style is exhibited, with the presence of a very characteristic "wobbly" bass line.

**KITCHEN TOM** (1908)—Written for a light-skinned cook from Atlantic City who won Eubie's respect by refusing to "pass," thereby accepting the lower wage paid to blacks. Eubie used a tune Tom used to whistle as the basis for the second strain.

**POOR KATIE REDD** (1910)—Written for a strong, well-educated, articulate woman who could swear a blue streak on occasion. Although this piece is a rag, the first strain has lyrics.

**JASSAMINE LANE** (1924)—This is a beautiful love ballad with words by Noble Sissle. It was used in the show *The Chocolate Dandies*.

**TRICKY FINGERS** (1908) and **TROUBLESOME IVORIES** (1911)—Virtuoso pieces which are exemplary of Eubie's rag composition style.

**RANDI'S RAG** (1974)—Written for a Scandinavian newspaper woman, this demonstrates that Blake at 91 still has not lost touch with many of his early influences.

**FIZZ WATER** and **CHEVY CHASE** (both 1911)—Although these pieces established Blake's fame as a composer, he still regrets selling these rags outright. It is a mistake he was never to repeat.

**DICTYS ON SEVENTH AVENUE** (1955)—This served as Eubie's thesis paper at NYU. Note the use of the whole tone scale.

**BUTTERFLY** (1935)—This is a delightful tone poem which seems a curious blend of Debussy and ragtime.

**EUBIE DUBIE** (1973)—The introduction and first strain were written by Johnny Guarneri and given to Eubie as a gift. Eubie later completed it.

**VALSE MARION** (1972)—The most wonderful of a series of *valse*s. Eubie said, "I wrote that especially for my wife, Marion, and she loves the way the Quartet treated it and so do I."

**I'M JUST WILD ABOUT HARRY** (1921)—Written with lyrics by Sissle, it was one of the hits of *Shuffle Along* and its popularity has continued.

M.N., S.R.

#### Timings:

Side 1: 3:10, 3:10, 3:10, 4:17, 2:24, 3:00, 2:28/22:27

Side 2: 2:42, 3:37, 3:03, 3:09, 4:35, 2:58, 1:28/22:24

Side 1: Band 1: © 1917 Warner Bros. Inc. (renewed); Band 2: © 1962 James Hubert ("Eubie") Blake; Band 3: © 1960 James Hubert ("Eubie") Blake; Band 4: © 1924 Warner Bros. Inc. (renewed); Band 5: © 1959 James Hubert ("Eubie") Blake; Band 6: © 1974 James Hubert ("Eubie") Blake; Band 7: © 1914 Edward B. Marks Music Corp. (renewed)

Side 2: Band 1: © 1962 James Hubert ("Eubie") Blake; Band 2: © 1972 James Hubert ("Eubie") Blake; Band 3: © 1972 Eubie Blake; Band 4: © 1969 James Hubert ("Eubie") Blake; Band 5: © 1972 Eubie Blake; Band 6: © 1971 James Hubert ("Eubie") Blake; Band 7: © 1921 Warner Bros. Inc. (renewed)

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STEREO

AN AMERICAN CLASSIC  
EUBIE BLAKE

MHS 4368  
SIDE 1

(22:27)  
33 1/3 RPM

1. Charleston Rag (The Sounds of Africa)
2. Kitchen Tom
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4. Jassamine Lane
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STEREO

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EUBIE BLAKE

MHS 4368  
SIDE 2

(22:24)  
33 1/3 RPM

1. Dictys on Seventh Avenue
2. Butterfly
3. Eubie Dubie
4. Chevy Chase
5. Valse Marion
6. Troublesome Ivories
7. I'm Just Wild About Harry

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